
July 2003 - Injury Prevention Newsletter

Alaska News and Resources

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National News and Resources

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- 1. Commissioner hears about ATV use:** as excerpted from the Anchorage Daily News. The nation's top watchdog on product safety leaned a thing or two from Alaskans about his latest target, all-terrain vehicles. At a daylong hearing in Anchorage Hal Stratton, chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission heard all about ATV use in Alaska - that people use them for manhunts, and snowplowing, hauling water, and racing. He listened to nurses, cops, safety instructors and salesmen and for each one he had a question: What can the government do to cut the injury rate? Stratton pushed hard to get firm answers. To those who looked to safety training he asked who would pay for it. He pushed people about helmet use. He popped to attention when ATV dealers from Anchorage and Soldotna said their industry's rider training program isn't working. "This is news to us," Stratton said. He added that he would find out why and try to get the training back on track. "We don't have the authority to regulate behavior," Stratton said, "but the Commission can ban products that it deems unsafe, and it can propose safety regulations that state governments can adopt." The Commission is conducting hearings throughout the United States as a result of a petition by consumer organizations in September 2002 to ban the sale of adult-size 4-wheel ATVs sold for use by children under age 16. The Chairman also visited Dillingham, some surrounding villages, and concluded his trip with another hearing in Fairbanks. The messages he heard were the same: ATVs are in integral part of Alaska, ATVs injuries are too high in Alaska, current education programs are scarce and not effective, and finally, helmets work.
- 2. Alaska's Injury Prevention program reviewed by National Association:** as excerpted from the Anchorage Daily News. Alaska suffer more fatal burns, drownings, gunshots, car wrecks, and ATV accidents per capita than anywhere else in the nation. But even as state education efforts have helped cut the death and injury toll in recent years, a national panel of injury prevention experts has found room for improvement. "So much good work has gone on here," review team leader Ann Thacher said as she delivered their findings to Alaska Department of Health and Social Services officials. "All of us are interested in giving these

recommendations to a good, strong program to make it better. Thatcher led seven fellow members of the State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association on a weeklong review of the State's Injury Surveillance and Prevention Program. They looked at what the state has done and recommended ways to do more, most of which can be accomplished at little or no cost, they said. You can read the full story online at:

<http://www.and.com/alaska/story/3533919p-3564784c.html> or you can view the formal report on the ISAPP website in a couple of weeks:

http://chems.alaska.gov/ems_injury_prevention.htm

3. **It's summertime in Alaska:** Alaskans are out on the water in full force this month and boating and water safety has to be a part of every outing this summer. This year there are 340 KIDS DON'T FLOAT sites throughout the state equipped with PFDs to be used while children are around water. To see if there is a site near you or if you would like to sponsor a site click on to:

http://chems.alaska.gov/kids_don't_float.htm

You never know what is around the river bend or what may be coming up upon you. Just ask Jane Cain. Jane was out on a jet-ski in the center of Big Lake when she was clipped by the float of a airplane coming in for a landing. The 44-year-old Wasilla resident said she's always been careful when operating a jet ski. She's a member of the International Jet Sports Boating Association and the Personal Water Craft Association, both of which promote safety on the water. "My helmet saved my life," said Cain. "I'm lucky I had all the safety gear on or I wouldn't be here."

Boating Safety classes **THIS WEEKEND.** Joe McCullough with the Alaska Office of Boating Safety will offer 2 eight-hour classes in Fairbanks this weekend at the Fish and Game Hunter Education Indoor Shooting Range, 1501 College Road. One class will be Saturday and the other Sunday. Each session is free of charge and runs from 9am-5pm. Participants will earn a certificate that will satisfy most boating safety requirements throughout the nation. For more information or to see when boating safety courses will be in your area click on to:

www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/boating/waterws.htm

4. **Advocate for Spinal Cord Injury prevention, treatment, and research traveling to Alaska:** Garrett Burgess, 10 and his father Benton will fly a single engine plane to every state capital in the United States this summer. The goal of this trip is raise awareness of spinal cord injury prevention, treatment, and recovery. He will also be using this opportunity to raise funds for spinal cord injury research. Garrett was paralyzed at the age of five in an automobile accident. Since that time he has been an active spokesman on behalf of children with disabilities and for spinal cord injury research. He is expected to be in Juneau on August 11 and 12 to meet with local and state officials but he will get a chance to experience a true Alaska adventure: a helicopter landing on a glacier (courtesy of ERA Aviation).
5. **Older Drivers:** The Road Information Program (TRIP) released a plan to allow older drivers to maintain their independence. Entitled "Designing Roadways to

Safely Accommodate the Increasingly Mobile Older Driver" the report highlighted the following points:

1. Statistics show that the number of older drivers being killed in motor vehicle crashes is increasing. For Americans ages 70 and older there was a 27% increase between 1991 and 2001 with Florida leading the nation in older driver fatalities.
2. In 2001, crashes involving at least one older driver caused 5,113 fatalities nationwide - a 20 percent increase from 1991.
3. From 1991-2001, the number of licensed drivers age 70 and older increase 32%. Approximately 10% of all drivers are 70 and older.
4. According to NHTSA, 50% of all older driver fatalities in 2001 occurred at intersections, while only 23% of younger driver fatalities (those under 70 years of age) occur at intersections.
5. Left hand turns are more problematic for older drivers, as they must make speed, distance, and gap judgments in a limited amount of time in order to enter or cross the through roadway.
6. Small and complex signage may be misunderstood or not seen quickly enough to alert older motorists about upcoming exits, obstacles, or changes in traffic patterns.

Based on these findings TRIP recommends the following comprehensive set of safety improvements:

1. Signage and lighting: clearer and less complex signage that is easier to follow. Larger lettering on signs and pavement markings. Better street lighting, particularly at intersections. Higher-performing retroreflective material in signs for better nighttime visibility.
2. Intersections: Bright, luminous lane markings and directional signals. Overhead indicators for turning lanes. Overhead street-name signs. Adding or widening left-turn lanes.
3. Streets and Highways: Wider lanes and shoulders to reduce the consequences of driving mistakes. Longer merge and exit lanes. Rumble strips to warn motorists when they are running off the road. Curves that are not as sharp. Improvements to pedestrian features as intersections.

You can log on to www.tripnet.org for a complete copy of the report.

The AMA also offers a web guide to help doctors decide whether their elderly patients are still fit to drive. The guide recommends that doctors ask patients if they have difficulty driving and to be alert for things that might hamper driving ability, such as cataracts, arthritis, strokes, and certain medications. The guide is available on the AMA's Web site with a free print version expected to follow later this year. On the net: www.ama-assn.org

6. **Help needed in reviewing new Household Products Database:** On Tuesday, August 12th, at 8pm Eastern time (that's 4pm Alaska time), the National Library of Medicine will be holding a one-hour on-line focus group discussion about a database that has been designed to provide information on the health and safety effects of indoor and outdoor products. You can participate from any location

where you have access to a computer. They would like to learn about your opinion, attitude, and perceptions of the website which you will be asked to review in advance to the focus group. You can also be reimbursed for your participation in the session. If you are interested in participating please submit your name, e-mail address, city, state and telephone number to:

Marybeth@mbsconsult.com. You will be contacted by someone to determine if you qualify. For more information on the National Library of Medicine visit their website at: www.nlm.nih.gov

7. **Don't forget the date: April 7, 2004 is World Health Day. It's theme: Road Safety:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated "Road Safety" as the theme of next year's World Health Day - April 7, 2004. You can read the entire resolution at www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/en/812.pdf and get your creative juices flowing. This is an excellent opportunity to get the word out about seatbelt use, child passenger safety, and booster seats.
8. **Product Recalls and Safety Information:** The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission tracks injuries or deaths in over 15,000 consumer products. To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at 800 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at 800-638-8270. Other information and product recalls are available on their website: www.cpsc.gov.

This message has been compiled by the Section of Community Health and EMS (CHEMS), Alaska Division of Public Health and sent to subscribers of the AK-Prev and AHELP list-serves. It has also been sent as a "bcc" to others in Alaska including Public Health Centers, SAFE KIDS coalitions, Native Health Organizations, and regional EMS Councils and Coordinators who may be interested and active in injury prevention and health promotion. The purpose is to share resources, breaking news, training opportunities, product recalls, and opinions to help prevent injuries to Alaskans. Feedback and contributions are encouraged. Contributions can be directed to Karen Lawfer: karen_lawfer@health.state.ak.us

Link for the AK-Prev and AK-EMSC list serve: http://chems.alaska.gov/ems_list_servers.htm

Link for AHELP list serve: <http://www.auroraweb.com/ahec>